

particularly, inappropriate intimacy stunts their growth.

Teenagers, by their nature, spend their teen years weaning themselves from their parents. That is what growing up is all about. It is about gaining your independence, gaining a sense of yourself, developing your own skills so that you can be your own person in the decades ahead.

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As one weans oneself from the control of one's parents, one also must gain that control oneself. For young women particularly, premature sexuality has the effect of transferring control to the young man. It is simply more true for young girls than it is for a young man. Yet, we do not talk with our girls about this at all.

We do not help them to see that, if they want to succeed in the project of growing up, if they want to be their own person, if they want to be intellectually strong, they want to be morally strong, they want to have a sound body, a sound mind, a sound heart, they have to take responsibility for themselves.

In seeking to leave their parents, it is particularly dangerous for young girls to shift that power of control through sexual intimacy to a young man. That is unfortunately exactly what happens, and we do not even talk about it.

So it is important to talk to one's teens. It is important to listen to the pressures they face. It is important not to be afraid of those pressures because, through discussion, one will arm one's child with an understanding of the power that abstinence provides them over themselves and gives them in shaping their future.

Now, growing up has always been tough. It is tough all through one's life to really grow up well. But it is particularly tough in teen years and during that process of adolescence. If we, as parents, cannot talk straighter with our children and cannot listen at a level that allows us to listen to things we never thought we would hear our kids say, then we cannot, with them, help them guide themselves through the difficult waters of adolescence in today's world and the many pressures that growing up imposes on teenagers.

So kids need to talk to their folks and folks need to listen to their children. We hope that, by investing money in the research necessary to better understand teen sexuality and teen growth, we will be better able to help kids understand how it is that one becomes empowered to be oneself and to determine one's own course and how it is we establish healthy, strong, loving relationships throughout one's lifetime. By investing money in this very important research project, we will be able to talk from an increasingly sound and strong basis of knowledge ourselves.

But we also hope that, through sheer publicity, we will be able to help teens

understand that premature sexual intimacy is destructive of their future.

I am delighted to be here with the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) today.

PARENTS' ROLE IN TEEN PREGNANCY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DUNCAN). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, I am also delighted to join the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. JOHNSON) as we serve on the House Caucus for the Prevention of Teenage Pregnancy. I am delighted for many year reasons; one, because this is an opportunity, and the month of May is an opportunity to raise the awareness.

Over the last several years, I have spoken out often and devoted a lot of time and energy to this effort. But no more time is more rewarding than talking to young people themselves and talking to community leaders about this issue.

This week alone, I spoke to three different schools. It included a high school and two junior high schools. What I am finding out is that young people themselves have views, opinions, and they are part of a leadership, too. They should be engaged in this issue.

I am convinced if one is effectively to reduce teenage pregnancy, we must, indeed, bring the awareness to the community of the consequences of teenage pregnancies, not only to the families, the young people themselves, but also to the community. But more importantly, we must, indeed, engage our youth, because they are factored in resolving this issue.

We have good news. Since 1990, teenage pregnancies have gone down. It has been a steady decline. So we should celebrate that as a Nation. We deserve to be proud of that activity. But in spite of our good efforts and success, still, yet today, more than 1 million children, young people, indeed, become pregnant each year, those younger than the age of 20. Nearly 1 million every year now, although it is going down, there is a steady number of persons, indeed, who are teenagers who are becoming parents before they reach their 20th birthday.

Also, in my part of the State, eastern North Carolina, the rate is not going down as fast. In fact, I have several of my counties where the rate is higher than in my State. So I am, indeed, concerned about that.

May, as I say, is an opportunity where we can bring the awareness to both the community and to the young people. The thing we want to emphasize to our young people that teenage is a time when they should be concentrating on education. They should be having fun. They should be talking

about their career. They should be growing up and not focused on pregnancy or being a parent prematurely.

Mr. Speaker, I was happy to join the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. JOHNSON) recently when the National Campaign to Prevent Teenage Pregnancy released their report. As the gentlewoman has already commented, that report emphasizes several things, both around parents and teenagers; and that teenagers really wanted to talk to their parents.

Sometimes parents thought teenagers wanted to talk to teenagers and were getting all the information from them. But they really thought they should get that information from the parents. Both parents and teenagers agree more often than one would think. Ninety-five percent of parents felt that abstinence was absolutely what should happen. Ninety-three percent of the teenagers thought, now one would not have thought that, but 93 percent of the teenagers themselves thought abstinence should be.

Both those same groups also felt that, but a lesser degree in terms of the parents, that, indeed, contraception should be a part of the story, and that they were not necessarily in conflict with each other; that abstinence should be emphasized; and, indeed, that contraception information about that should be a part of that as well.

Also, there was consensus about the role of the school. Both parents and teenagers felt that the primary role of the school was not necessarily to teach the values or the appropriateness, but there was a role for the schools, and that the school should be engaged in that process; that the primary responsibility should be the parent. If both parents and teenagers believe that, something must be missing in this game. It means that parents and teenagers are not talking to each other.

Now, many of the parents, as I said earlier, on one hand believe that contraception information and abstinence may give a dual message that may be in conflict. But the teenagers did not believe that. They did not see it. They felt that abstinence, indeed, the 93 percent believed it; but also a vast majority of those teenagers also felt the information about contraception was very, very important.

In fact, I personally believe that abstinence is the most important. But I also know that young people are very active sexually. So we must be engaged in providing the critical important information to teenagers so they can make the decision. I believe if we empower young people, they will make the difference.

Over the last several years, I have spoken out often and devoted a lot of time and energy to teen pregnancy prevention. My most meaningful efforts have involved a host of meetings and discussions with youth and community leaders where the focus has been on prevention and development activities in my congressional district. This week, I visited three different schools including a senior high school and two middle schools.